

# One to One Advice Voucher Service

## What is the Voucher Service

The solutions for business portfolio is the government's offer of publicly funded business support products and services to help companies and individuals start, grow and succeed in business. The voucher service is a mechanism through which Business Link can provide customers with access to one to one advice.

For eligible customers looking to start up a business or in their early years of trading, one to one advice can be offered as part of the Intensive Start up Support (ISUS) product. The purpose of the product is to provide additional support to those individuals and groups underrepresented in self employment and business ownership, who are actively exploring setting up in business.

For certain customers, Business Link may therefore issue a Voucher with a unique identification number to redeem against a One to One advice session. Clients receiving vouchers can choose from suppliers participating in the Voucher Service and who are listed on the Business Link Supplier Brokerage Service (SBS). However, the Counselling Session voucher has a restricted list of specific suppliers that include members of the National Federation of Enterprise Agencies and other recognised business support organisations.

Suppliers can register on the SBS by visiting [www.supplierbrokerage.co.uk](http://www.supplierbrokerage.co.uk) to take part in the Voucher Service and should indicate that they wish to do so by ticking the appropriate boxes and accepting the additional terms and conditions relating specifically to the voucher service.

Once the SBS registration is complete you will receive an acknowledgement that it is live. You will also receive separately an email regarding your status as far as the vouchers are concerned either accepting you and providing all relevant documentation or pointing out areas where your entry needs improvement before being accepted.

(Please note that those accepted can be asked by clients to do work for any voucher (except the Business Counselling Voucher where the list of suppliers is restricted) and you should refer to the Terms and Conditions document for specific guidance).

## Vouchers Available

There are two "core" vouchers issued under the Intensive Start-Up Support product, these being:

A Business Counselling Session Voucher for those who have not yet started trading is worth £100.

A Business Support Session Voucher for those that have started trading and are within their first 3 years is worth £100. This is also available as additional support, where need has been demonstrated for those who have received and used the first Voucher giving Pre-Starts, potentially, a total of £200.

Other vouchers may become available from time to time and details of those will be provided to suppliers who participate in the service at which time the Terms and Conditions document will also be updated.

We encourage you to offer as much time as needed for the vouchers but at least an hour and a half of time for each of them.

## How can the One to One Advice service help our clients?

One to One Advice is an important part of the Business Link start-up programme. We want to ensure that those eligible for ISUS have as much support as possible to help them and their business succeed.

The service provides an opportunity for them to discuss their business ideas and issues with an experienced adviser or consultant. So, whether they need help in raising finance, protecting their intellectual property, creating a business plan or

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developing a marketing strategy, there is someone to provide the advice they need.

### **What can they expect from the one to one advice session? (not including the Counselling Session)**

They should expect to take away a summary of the discussion that will:

- identify their needs,
- detail the next steps that they need to take and,
- give details of the support available.

### **What do they need to prepare or take to the session?**

To get the best from their business advice session we suggest to clients that they think through the key issues affecting them and their new business and what they need to ask the adviser. Take copies of their business plan, financial forecasts and any marketing material they have prepared and which are relevant to what the discussion is to be about. If seeking advice of a specialist nature take copies of relevant documents such as letters or contracts. They are also told to be prepared for their business idea or business to be challenged and that the adviser may ask searching questions to help them to fully understand the business issues and appropriate next steps.

### **How do the Vouchers work?**

Vouchers are valid for 60 days from the date of issue (but can be extended) and can be redeemed with the suppliers registered on the Business Link Supplier Brokerage Service (SBS) and who have requested to be part of the Voucher Service and have been accepted to do so.

We do provide clients with information about choosing suppliers when vouchers are issued, they are then able to search the database on line for a supplier that meet their needs. The choice of supplier is entirely their own based on the information they can see on the SBS, so entries

created by suppliers act as their sales tool on the system (first voucher is restricted to certain suppliers although clients still have a choice – see above).

Once they have reviewed the responses returned we suggest they make a call to several of the suppliers to discuss the help they need and ensure that the supplier can provide it. Once they have made their decision then they should contact the supplier of their choice to arrange a meeting and provide their voucher number. If they do not have access to a computer to find a supplier then they can approach us for assistance to help them choose.

### **Administration by Suppliers**

Two main administrative tasks have to be undertaken by suppliers who agree to take part in the service.

Firstly upon contact from a client who should provide the voucher number, this needs to be validated **as soon as possible**. To do this a web portal is accessed (details provided once accepted to the service) into which the voucher number and the meeting date are entered. The system will validate the voucher and “lock” the voucher to the supplier once that has been done. This only takes a minute or two.

The second part of the administration involves completing a document on line (which needs to be printed and signed by both adviser and client following the meeting – see below).

As part of the Data Protection Act suppliers are also asked to obtain various personal information to ensure our records are up to date and enter this on the form.

They also have to complete three boxes on the form (using bullet points only in order to keep writing to a minimum) advising:

- 1) The headlines of the points/issues discussed

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- 2) Any action points given to the client
- 3) Any action to be taken by the adviser

The form should then be printed and signed by both adviser and client.

This form is then sent to Business Link with an invoice and we will then pay for the work undertaken. (Please note that this procedure is different for some of the larger vouchers we issue – but full guidance is given when accepted to the service).

### **Evaluation**

After the meeting has taken place the client may be contacted by an independent researcher carrying out a customer evaluation of the service. This is very important to us in order to monitor the quality and effectiveness of the service we provide. However as they only undertake a “sample” we also send the client a feedback questionnaire asking them to rate the service out of 10 on 6 key areas.

**If you have any questions about the process or becoming a supplier for the Voucher Service then please call Business Link on 08457 17 16 15**

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